

The Reaching Agents of Change (RAC) Project in Mozambique (2011-2014)

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ToT participants during a market visit in Maputo, Mozambique (credit E. Munda)



Background:

Sweetpotato is widely grown in Mozambique.

Sweetpotato production statistics from 2007 to 2011 ranked Mozambique fourth in terms of aggregate national production, after cassava, rice and maize (FAOSTAT, 2011). It is estimated that 69% of pre-school aged Mozambican children suffer from vitamin A deficiency. Earlier work by the Towards Sustainable Nutrition Improvement (TSNI) project demonstrated that consumption of orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) has an impact on vitamin A status. Other studies indicated that OFSP was the cheapest source of vitamin A available in local markets in Mozambique (Traoré et.al, 2012). The OFSP is a vitamin A powerhouse, and it can be used to address the high percentage of vitamin A deficiency (VAD) in Mozambique, especially among young children under the age of five and women of reproductive age. In addition, OFSP contributes significant amounts of vitamins C, E, K and several B vitamins. Leaves

also have good micronutrient contents and adequate protein (4%) for use as food and animal feed. OFSP can thus be used to cost-effectively improve nutrition, empower women, and increase income earning opportunities, even for the poorest households. Its short maturing period (3-5 months), ability to grow under marginal conditions and flexible planting and harvest times are also driving its expansion. Despite the comparative advantages in production, there are still many challenges such as drought, floods, low production and consumption of sweetpotatoes. Other challenges include infrastructural and behavior and attitude factors with a perception that sweetpotato is a female crop. Mozambique has been at the forefront of breeding more drought-tolerant OFSP varieties and has 15 new OFSP varieties available for use, 6 of these are broadly adapted and 9 are for specific agro-ecologies.





ToT participants during a group exercise at Eduardo Mondlane University (credit J. Mkumbira)

The Reaching Agents of Change (RAC) project (2011-2014) was a unique initiative that advocated for increased investment in OFSP to combat vitamin A deficiency among young children and women of reproductive age. RAC worked towards strengthening advocacy and technical capacity for successful nutrition interventions using OFSP in Mozambique, Tanzania, Nigeria and to a lesser extent in Ghana and Burkina Faso. The project was implemented by the International Potato Center (CIP) and Helen Keller International in partnership with national institutions.

What we wanted to achieve?

The RAC project in Mozambique has been working towards generating new investments to scale up adoption of OFSP as a tool to combat vitamin A deficiency among young children and women of reproductive age. Mozambique was expected to advocate to governments, the private sector, donors and NGOs to achieve new investments totaling at least USD 6 million for OFSP activities in 3 years. RAC advocacy activities began by carrying out a situation analysis in 2011 and needs assessment involving consultations with stakeholders, reviewing key policy and other documents related to nutrition and agriculture. The assessment identified the provinces of Maputo, Manica, Sofala, Tete, Zambezia, and Nampula as target areas for project activities based on the level of OFSP scaling-up activities by other projects and ongoing vine dissemination activities.

The situation analysis also revealed that Mozambique had a conducive policy climate that favours agriculture and nutrition. Some of the policies and strategies approved by the Mozambican Government include the Strategy and Action Plan for Food Security 2008-2015 (ESAN II), the Strategic Plan for the Agricultural Sector Development (PEDSA) and the Action Plan for Multi-sectoral Reduction

of Chronic Malnutrition in Mozambique (PAMRDC). Other policy documents include the Government Five Year Plan 2009-2014 and the Action Plan for the Reduction of Poverty III. However, the important policies and strategies for reducing malnutrition did not mention biofortification or the use of vitamin A rich foods such as OFSP, as one of the viable and cost effective strategies. This meant that crops such as OFSP were not receiving adequate attention by donors hence affecting investment in the crop. The RAC project therefore devoted efforts towards influencing policy to ensure OFSP is included as an integral part of strategies that address food insecurity and malnutrition in the country.

RAC has also been working towards building the capacity of national implementing agencies to design and implement technically strong, gender-sensitive and cost-effective programs that drive uptake of OFSP. The foundation of this effort was the establishment of a 10-day course on “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Sweetpotato” – carried out annually over three years. The course was carried out in collaboration with the University of Eduardo Mondlane (UEM), which was committed to conducting the course on an annual basis during and after the project period. RAC also carried out a 6-day learning workshop on “Engendered Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato Project Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation”. The event was held at Pequenos Libombos, Maputo, Mozambique, from 4-10 April, 2013.

What have we achieved?

- 1. RAC has built a cadre of 20 OFSP advocates to help** generate new investments and influence leaders and policy makers in agriculture, nutrition, and health sectors to implement the advocacy strategy and accelerate adoption of OFSP as a means to combat vitamin A deficiency and improve food security. Advocates selected include key personnel in media, private sector, donors, government and NGOs.



RAC advocate Edgar Cossa from SETSAN discussing OFSP with the President of Mozambique (Credit M. Mundlovo)

2. The RAC Project in Mozambique recorded investments amounting to over USD 11 million (184% achievement). In addition, 8 proposals (developed mostly by 12 participants who attended the “Engendered Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato Project Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation” course) of approximately USD 122,650 have been developed and submitted to various donors.
3. Advocacy efforts by the RAC team in Mozambique influenced the inclusion of biofortification and OFSP as a food-based approach into existing national policies, strategies, plans and program interventions in agriculture and nutrition. In total, 12 important strategic documents / plans have incorporated biofortification / OFSP and 2 national programmes have included OFSP as a strategic crop:
 - RAC partnered with SETSAN (National Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition) to discuss various policy reform agendas and the integration of biofortification and OFSP into the National Agricultural Policy Framework.
 - This partnership has seen the inclusion of OFSP in the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) investment plan, socio-economic plans as well as multi-sectoral plans at provincial level, as well as major agricultural/health programs.
 - Six provinces (Inhambane, Maputo, Manica, Tete, Zambezia and Sofala) have included OFSP in their Social and Economic Plans for 2014.
 - The Action Plan for Food Security and Nutrition (PASAN) strategic document features OFSP as one of the recommended crops for livelihoods.
 - RAC’s involvement in the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement has facilitated advocacy and communication training sessions for the platform to strengthen the capacity of the civil society to advocate for nutrition investments and policies.
 - OFSP was included in Multi-Sectoral Action Plans for Chronic Malnutrition Reduction (PAMRDC) at various provincial levels such as Tete, Manica, Sofala Provinces.
 - Other achievements within this theme include a communications working group that was established under SETSAN and included OFSP in its strategy.
 - Biofortification (and OFSP in particular) was integrated into the National Child Feeding and the National School Feeding Programs.
 - OFSP was included in the 2013 national food security baseline survey assessment questionnaire, and
 - A working group on biofortification (BioSAN-WG) was established in 2013.
4. The advocacy role played by RAC and other partners led to commitment by the Government of Mozambique to invest in OFSP through the CAADP and National Investment Plan for Agricultural Sector (PNISA) process to support the production of OFSP.
5. In Mozambique, RAC focused on creating awareness of OFSP as part of a food-based approach to alleviating vitamin A deficiency among decision makers and

stimulating demand for OFSP through supporting the development of an OFSP value chain strategy. Through the RAC awareness creation efforts, OFSP was featured prominently in several major events such as national agricultural shows and trade fairs including the Maputo International Trade Fairs (FACIM) of 2012 and 2013 and the UN Global Day of Action. OFSP was featured through other media including 1 radio documentary, 3 TV documentaries, 3 mainstream newspaper articles and 2 online articles.

6. RAC facilitated the signing of 3 MoUs for promotion of OFSP:
 - the National Television of Mozambique (TVM) to integrate nutrition and agronomic messages about OFSP and other crops in local media broadcasting programs,
 - the National Institute of Social Communication (ICS which coordinates 37 community radio stations across the country) with the aim of driving demand for OFSP in rural areas through radio programs, and
 - the National Institute for the Promotion of the Small and Medium Enterprises (IPEME) - focusing on raising awareness about opportunities for SMEs to process, package and market OFSP under the institute’s agribusiness portfolio.
 The partnerships have led to increased media promotion of nutrition related interventions, including OFSP.
7. RAC has helped establish 10 ha of disease free primary seed multiplication sites over the three years.
8. A total of 20 ha of secondary sites were established



ToT participants preparing rapid multiplication beds at Eduardo Mondlane University (credit J. Mkumbira)



ToT participant during a market visit in Maputo, Mozambique (credit E. Munda)

over the three years in collaboration with district and provincial offices of Ministry of Agriculture as well as local NGOs.

9. A total of 12.5 ha were established through tertiary multiplication in 2013 and 16ha in 2014.
10. In total, RAC has supported the establishment of 58.5 ha in Mozambique since 2012.
11. Through RAC partners in government, private sector and NGOs, a total of 122,600 households obtained OFSP vines in 2012, 3,340 households in 2013 and 4,480 in 2014. Overall, RAC has reached 130,420 households in Mozambique since 2012.
12. The capacity of the training partner, University of Eduardo Mondlane (UEM) as well as that of 12 national facilitators has been built. These have in turn trained a total of 69 (12 female) change agents through the 10-day ToT course on "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Sweetpotato".
13. About 15 10-day ToT graduates have held step-down courses, in which 926 tertiary trainees have been trained.



References

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